

September 2, 2005

Dear Friend:

Four days ago, one of the largest natural disasters in the history of our country took place. In response, Congress today passed a \$10.5 billion package that will go toward both immediate and long-term relief efforts, and will assist the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to increase delivery of medical aid, water, food, and other supplies. Meanwhile, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is working in New Orleans to repair levee damage that resulted in eighty percent of the city now being underwater. Additionally, the generosity of millions of Americans has resulted in monetary, clothing and food aid being sent down to the region.

Nevertheless, we must seriously evaluate how and why this disaster occurred. In early August 2005, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA) released a report stating that environmental conditions indicated an increased possibility for destructive and powerful hurricanes along the Gulf Coast. It is a warning that has been voiced for some time, and we are now seeing the results if we continue to ignore such information.

Further, it is evident that the immediate response to this disaster was not proportional to the need. All of us have seen the disheartening photos of those rendered homeless and without sustenance. The damage of the hurricane was compounded by the resulting failure of several flood control features, and FEMA faces perhaps the largest disaster relief effort ever. Nevertheless, the response of the government to the needs of these communities was demonstrably inadequate. It must be determined why that happened, and how future disasters responses can improve.

Our thoughts go out to all the victims and their families, and we must continue to do all we can to help those who remain stranded and homeless. Those wanting to help are encouraged to visit <http://www.fema.gov> or <http://www.redcross.org> for more information about suggested locations and organizations that are accepting donations. I, along with all Americans, will continue to watch and do what we can to help our fellow citizens recover from this horrible situation.

Yours very truly,

Tom Udall
Member of Congress